

## Warming up (to him)

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# Warming up (to him)

by [barisan](#)

## Summary

Wei Wuxian finds out that the Cold Springs are not a good place for a nap. Lan Qiren finds him and uncovers a Jiang secret; will he be able to manage the *feelings*??? No clickbait.

## Notes

This is nothing but self-indulgent. If you like Jiang Fengmian this isn't for you.

The usual "WWX gets hurt and everyone else is horrified" shenanigans.

Set after the scene where WWX goes to the Cold Springs and invites Lan Zhan to Yunmeng.

Thanks to my lovely beta [shackledbyurlove](#)

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

- Inspired by [Warmth](#) by [Quiet\\_crash](#)

*“Get lost!”*

After recovering from his laughing fit, Wei Wuxian looked up only to notice the other was no longer there.

“Lan Zhan?” He glanced at the blue stones on the riverbank. Lan Wangji’s clothes were no longer there.

“Lan Zhan, Lan Zhan! Don’t go. I was talking nonsense, my fault, but don’t ignore me.” He yelled at the retreating back. “You don’t have to-“ Ah, and he’s gone. “-leave. Ah, just amazing. Now you’ve done it, Wei Wuxian” Sighing, he made his way back into the Cold Springs. “No wonder he hates you. He’ll never be your friend like this.”

He lowered himself into the water, trying to ignore the way his skin prickled painfully. “Who will I annoy now if I have to meditate alone?.” He pouted to himself, controlling the shivering as his teeth clattered.

Perhaps, if he endures the cold for longer, his body will grow accustomed and he won’t feel as if his bones and blood were freezing over.

Maybe that’s what the Lans do. Or maybe they no longer feel the cold as biting as he does, because they grew up in these mountains, swam and bathed in rivers and ponds far colder than the warm waters of Yunmeng.

Ah, Lotus Pier, do the Shidis miss him? He has been gone for almost two months now. Has their training been too hard without him?

Oh, how long has it been since he felt the warm strain of his muscles after a long morning of sparring? Perhaps he could ask Lan Zhan... or not. Yeah, no. He must still be mad. Perhaps another time.

He should apologise. He did make Lan Zhan break the rules and be punished. And now he interrupted his meditation. Yeah, he should apologise.

Maybe he should give him a gift too, a peace offering. Something like the bunnies he saw on his way through the back hills.

Yeah, bunnies. They’re fat and tender. He could roast them and-

Ah, but Lan Zhan doesn’t eat meat.

Would he like to keep them?

Mn, Lan Zhan... yeah, he can picture him petting the rabbits. They would look so small in his lap.

Mn. Bunnies.

Soft and round and warm.

So warm.

Ah, seems like he was right. The water is no longer cold, even if the moon is already high in the sky.

And he's tired. Maybe he should rest for a little while. There's a reason he shouldn't fall asleep in the water, but he can't remember.

It's so warm. Like Mama's sunny smile. Mama. Mama, can you see A-Ying? A-Ying became a cultivator like Mama and Baba. A-Ying has friends, Baba, A-Ying is no longer cold. Baba. Mama.

Mn. So, so warm.

---

Lan Qiren had arrived late that evening. He barely had time to sit down for tea with his nephews before Haishi.

Wangji had been punished with the discipline rulers. Along with that hellion, Wei Wuxian.

That boy, he truly is mischief incarnate. How dare he disrupt Cloud Recesses' quiet? And to drag Wangji into it? Truly despicable.

He wakes up before Maoshi and settles into his familiar routine, hoping the practised pattern would calm his nerves and soothe his temper in preparation to face that boy at the lectures later that morning.

By the time the bells signal for the rest of the Sect to rise, he still doesn't feel centred enough.

Lan Qiren decides to skip the morning meal in order to take a walk for the rest of the hour in the peace of the back mountains.

He strolls past the Clan residences, across the meadow and down the path that oversees the river.

He stops there and closes his eyes, focusing on the sound of the running stream.

Taking a deep breath, he finally matches the tranquillity of his surroundings.

As he opens his eyes, his sight catches a slight disturbance near the riverbank. The view is mostly covered by the foliage, so he walks closer.

Making his way down, he takes note of a pile of robes on a rock.

Black and red robes.

*What in heaven's name is he doing here?*



“Wei Wuxian!” He scolds as he finally gets to the bottom. “How dare you to trespass—”

But all words die in his throat.

“Wei Wuxian!” He yells as he rushes to the boy’s side — of course, a boy, he was only ever a boy. “Wei Wuxian! Can you hear me?” Uncaring for decorum, he falls on his knees and drags Wei Wuxian’s limp body out of the water. His skin is cold. Impossibly cold.

“No, Wei Wuxian! Don’t you dare!” He places an ear on his barely moving chest. It feels like hours before he makes out the faintest beat. His own heart hammers in his throat. “If this is another one of your pranks-!” Wei Wuxian’s usually tan face is deathly pale, lips almost purple.

Lan Qiren sheds his own outer robe, holding the boy up to wrap it around him. As he does so, he feels irregular ridges over the skin. He sneaks a glance and feels his own blood freeze at the sight.

Whip scars. Some recently scabbed wound seemed to have opened at some point, staining the hem of his trousers red.

Lan Qiren curses himself as he holds Wei Wuxian tight against his chest. “How?” He questions, standing on legs far too heavy.

“Healers.” He breathes as he all but runs back the way he came towards the main compound. “The healers will take care of you, boy.” He promises.

He passes many bewildered elders and disciples on his way to the healer’s pavilion, but pays them no heed, too focused on making sure the boy’s impossibly slow breathing doesn’t stop.

As soon as the building comes into view, he throws away all propriety and yells. “Healers! Quick! Prepare a bed and boil water!”

The door opens before he even tries to reach for it, allowing for him to not lower his pace and rush inside. Lan Xiang’s face is sharp as she takes in the scene. “What happened?” She questions, already rolling her sleeves and leading him towards an empty cot.

“He was in the Cold Springs.” He answered as he lowered Wei Wuxian onto the bed. “I don’t know for how long.” He tried pulling away, but a weak hand held onto his lapels. “He—” Lan Qiren, unseemly as it may be, stuttered, shaky hands coming to take the boy’s cold one. “He has scars on his back, but I was told he was only punished with our discipline rulers, not—” He takes a breath to steady himself. “Not the whip.”

Lan Xiang checked his eyes and mouth as the other healers heated seed packets and prepared hot water bags. “His body’s temperature is dangerously low.” She placed two fingers on his pulse. “If he were a lesser cultivator, he would already be dead,” she said plainly.

“Dead!?”

“You found him on time, Qiren,” she reassured. “We need to elevate his temperature. Both internally and externally.” She received a pair of packets with talismans on them. Some sigils

were familiar, but the strokes were not quite the same. All he knew was that they were supposed to help Wei Wuxian warm up.

He could only stare as the healers dried Wei Wuxian with warm towels and pulled off the wet trousers, settling him with softer sleeping robes and nimbly bandaging the reopened wounds on his back before pulling thick comforters over his body. Lan Qiren kept his hold steady on his hand under the covers.

“And the marks on his back?”

“They are indeed whip scars.” She didn’t stop her ministrations. “They appear to be from a spiritual weapon, given the amount of scarring.”

“What?” He rasps. “Why would he have scars from-” *Zidian?*

*Impossible.*

Why on earth would Wei Wuxian have whip scars? Why wasn’t he reported missing? It is clear he must have spent hours, if not the whole night in the Cold Springs. How is it that nobody looked for him? Who even allowed him past the wards, unchaperoned?

“Send for Xichen, we must-.” He stood up, but the hand on his gripped back.

“N-no.” Came the smallest whimper. “No dogs, please, A-Ying will be good. Don’t call the d-dogs.” Wei Wuxian’s blue lips slurred.

Lan Qiren looked up at Lan Xiang. “Confusion is to be expected. He won’t regain full consciousness for a while,” she explained. “We’ll feed him warm liquids and wait for his body temperature to stabilise. His condition is still critical.”

He nodded and beckoned for a disciple to come closer. “Find Lan Xichen. Tell him I won’t be able to handle today’s lecture, have someone cover today’s topics.” The disciple bows and leaves swiftly.

Lan Qiren sits back down, making sure not to let go of the other’s trembling hand.

“I’m sorry.” He hears the faint whisper.

He glances up to see Wei Wuxian’s glassy eyes. “I’m sorry, Lan Zhan.”

“Wei Wuxian.” He frowns. When did he start calling his nephew so intimately? “You are in the healer’s ward. Can you hear me?”

“Bunnies.” Wei Wuxian’s disoriented gaze falls on him. “Do you like bun-” He takes a shallow breath. “Bunnies, Lan Zhan?”

Lan Xiang takes a steaming bowl from a novice healer. “Qiren, help me tilt his head so he can drink.”

He hums and easily reaches behind Wei Wuxian to raise his head.

“Will Lan Zhan be my friend if I get him bunnies?” He slurs and makes no move to sip at the clearly bitter herbal concoction.

“Gongzi.” Lan Xiang grabs his chin and makes him open his mouth. “You have to drink this.”

Wei Wuxian’s eyes drift closed. “A-Ying is sleepy, Mama.”

“You must stay awake, Wei-gongzi.” She lightly smacked the side of his face until he opened his eyes before starting to pour the medicinal soup into his mouth, massaging along his throat to help him swallow.

It took several tries until the bowl was finally empty, having to keep Wei Wuxian awake and breathing. “Mama, I had the most wonderful dream.” He mumbles as Lan Qiren lays him back on the pillow. “I almost remembered Mama and Baba.” His lips curved slightly upwards in what Lan Qiren could only call a pitiful smile.

He shares another look with Lan Xiang, but neither says a word.

“Lan Zhan, why did you grow a beard?” Wei Wuxian’s speech is still weak. “You look like your Shufu. Do you hate me like he does? Is that why you have a beard?” He let go of Lan Qiren’s hand and tried to reach for his beard, but fell limp at the lack of strength.

Lan Qiren can only stare as the boy’s eyes blurry. “The bunnies won’t like it. I’ll— I’ll teach them to eat it so you can’t keep it. You’re not allowed to have a beard, Lan Zhan.” He does nothing as he watches a tear fall down Wei Wuxian’s cheek. “Please, don’t hate me, Lan Zhan.”

At those words, his eyes fell shut once again.

“Wei Wuxian?” Lan Qiren feels a stone lodge in his throat. “Wei Wuxian?” He repeats, frantic.

“Wei-gongzi?” Lan Xiang sets her fingers back on his pulse before her eyes widen. “Everyone clear!” She yells, uncaring for any rules broken.

She pulls back the covers and takes away the pillow so Wei Wuxian lays flat on the bed. She wastes not a second before locking her hands over his chest and pressing down rhythmically. “Someone light an incense!” She doesn’t falter in her compressions. “Disciple Tang, come hold his shoulders.”

“What is happening?” Lan Qiren takes a step back.

“His heart stopped. Compressions will keep the blood flowing until we get it to beat again. We need to keep track of how long he’s out.” 20, 21, 22...

“Wh-” He doesn’t even know what to ask.

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“Shufu?” He hears Xichen’s voice from the door.

Oh, no. Xichen shouldn't see this. He should get him away before—

But Lan Qiren cannot move. He stares dumbly as Lan Xiang stops the compressions, covering Wei Wuxian's mouth and breathing air into his lungs, going back to the compressions, counting, counting, counting, stopping, breathing, breathing, pressing, pressing, pressing, pressing—

“Shufu?” Lan Xichen's voice is panicked as he comes closer. “Is that Wei-gongzi? What happened?”

That, at least, is something he knows. “I found him unconscious in the Cold Springs.” He can't tear his eyes from the sight before them.

“The Cold Springs?”

“I do not know how he entered.” He breathed.

“Oh, heavens.” Xichen's eyes grew wide, a hand coming up to cover his mouth. “I let him pass. Wangji was with him before we had tea.”

“One incense stick!” A Healer calls loudly.

“Step back!” Lan Xiang yelled before having her spiritual rings spread on her hands, channelling energy onto them and pressing them against Wei Wuxian's bare chest.

His body jerks with the shock of energy and Lan Xiang quickly goes back to pumping her hands.

“Is he dying?” Xichen croaks. “Is Wei-gongzi dying? Oh, Gods, Heavens, no. I shouldn't— Oh, Wangji—”

“Find him.” He finally looks at his nephew's horrified face. “Wei Wuxian asked after Wangji. We must know what happened.”

“Yes, Shufu.” He bowed hastily before leaving.

Lan Qiren couldn't bring himself to keep watching Wei Wuxian as he died. He focused on the burning incense, eyes fixed on the lit end going down, down, down.

Another stick being lit. Burning down, down, down.

Another, and another, and another, always the same movement right out of his sight, the same sound of the bed creaking, Lan Xiang's laboured breathing, her voice carrying clearly as she commands the other healers.

He does not register Lan Xiang eventually stopping and sighing. Nor does he hear her whisper instructions to the novices.

No, he doesn't see nor does he hear if Wei Wuxian is still alive. All he can process is the fact that he was dying. That he almost died in his arms. That he would have died alone if Lan

Qiren hadn't gone on a walk through the back mountains.

All he can see is the image of the boy – the child – laying cold, alone, forgotten, in the same waters that were supposed to heal. His skin was so pale he had thought he was already dead.

And he remembers the marks on his back.

Scars from what could only be Yu Ziyuan's Zidian. A first class spiritual weapon, of all things.

Some were not even fully healed, having bled after the beating with the discipline rulers. It was clear the damage couldn't be much older than the time he had spent in the Cloud Recesses.

“-ren.” He feels a hand on his shoulder. “Qiren.” He turns to see Lan Xiang staring at him with a crease between her brows.

“Is he–? How–?”

“He is alive.” Lan Qiren feels a mountain lift from his chest. “We stabilised his heart and his temperature is rising steadily, but he won't wake up for a while. I would like to keep him in observation for at least a fortnight, but he is a strong boy, he will recover.” Her frown softens and she hands him a handkerchief. “Your nephews are waiting outside. Clean yourself first.”

“What–” He raises a hand to his *somehow* damp face. “Oh.” He receives it and wipes his cheeks with what little dignity he had left. “Thank you, Lan Xiang.”

“Now go, Xichen and Wangji were visibly distressed.”

He sneaked a glance at the cot behind her before turning towards the door.

Wei Wuxian was alive. He was breathing. His heart was beating on its own.

Wei Wuxian was alive.

---

It had been a long time since he had nightmares as vivid as this one.

At least his mind wasn't so cruel as to give him the image of those growling beasts as they feasted on his frail body.

No. He only felt the pain.

The throbbing burn on his arms and legs as his skin and flesh was torn by vicious dogs.

The numbing cold that couldn't be chased away in damp alleys as snow began to fall.

The unstoppable trembling that came with the sharp sting of each lashing of lightning.

The pressure on his ribs that came with each breath.

By the time he manages to escape the terror, he's still not sure which pain is real and which isn't. Where he is and where he isn't.

"Wha-" He tries to sit up but the ache on his ribs hasn't subsided. For the first time since he formed his core, he felt weak.

"You shouldn't move, Wei-gongzi." A woman's voice.

"Who?" He turns his head towards her. What happened? Where is he? Did he get injured in a night-hunt?

"I am the Lan Head Healer, Lan Xiang." She lowered the scroll she was reading. "Do you know where you are?"

"Lan?" His brows furrowed for a second before he remembered. "I'm in Cloud Recesses."

"Yes." She stood up. "Do you remember what happened?"

"I..." He tries to recall.

Coming to Gusu. The lectures. Copying rules. The Waterborne Abyss. Drinking. Going out. Being caught by Lan Zhan and punished alongside him. Going to the Cold Springs...

"No?" He frowns, trying to find what could have led to him being bedridden.

"You suffered severe hypothermia." She stated bluntly. "Lan Qiren found you unconscious in the Cold Springs. We attempted to raise your temperature by traditional means, but your heart gave out. You collapsed for two hours before we managed to resuscitate you. Three ribs were broken in the process," she listed. "We have not yet sent a report to Yunmeng. Lan Qiren wishes to speak with you before."

"I... died?"

"Technically, yes." She nodded. "Since your heart wasn't beating and you didn't breathe on your own. But your soul didn't completely leave your body, your core didn't suffer any damage other than being drained. Your condition is stable now, but I'll keep you under observation."

"But... how?" He couldn't understand. He died from *the cold*? Now?

"Hypothermia is not common in cultivators, let alone strong ones such as yourself." She walked closer. "But you were exposed to almost freezing water for hours. And it seems your body is more sensitive to cold." Her voice softened. "Cold intolerance can be caused by many things, such as a poor diet, starvation, for example, which can have long term consequences." She sat at the end of his bed, taking in a more familiar posture. She reminded him of the Jiang Head Healer. She was kind. "Wei-gongzi, I must ask. Are you being underfed in the Jiang Sect?"

"What?" He rasped. "Of course not! They feed me well! I get to eat everything I want!" He protested. Of course he did. Shijie had made sure he knew he was allowed to!

“Apologies, Wei-gongzi. Given the state of your back I assumed-”

“My back?”

“The whip scars, Wei-gongzi,” she said slowly. “Some of them reopened after yesterday's punishment. We cleaned and bandaged them.”

“Oh.” He grimaced. Right. Yu-furen’s warning to behave still hadn’t completely healed.

“I understand this must be upsetting.” Lan Xiang clasped her hands in her lap. “But it is something we need to know in order to provide proper treatment.”

“But I already told you, I eat properly now!”

“Now?” She tilted her head.

He avoided her gaze. “I lived on the streets for a few years before Jiang-zongzhu found me.” Even if Wei Wuxian felt no shame for having survived such a life, he can’t take neither the pity nor derision that comes when people find out. It wasn’t a secret, especially not in Yunmeng, where even the other disciples didn’t want to play with him at first, fearing they would be soiled by his mere touch. Where everyone in Lotus Pier heard Yu-furen’s voice as she called him a street rat, an ungrateful stray, both a bastard and a servant’s son with a whore for a mother.

There is a moment of silence as Wei Wuxian steels himself for it. The sympathy, the *‘I’m sorry’*, the way she will look at him as if he still were that sickly waif. As if he hadn’t grown into a strong cultivator.

*But strong cultivators don’t die from the cold.*

“I see.” He sneaks a glance at her but finds no judgement on her face. “Thank you for telling me.”

“What?” His eyes widened.

“Knowing this will help us understand your condition and provide better care.” Lan Xiang said with a polite nod. “I will not pry and ask you more than what I need to know as a healer.”

“Oh.” *The no gossip rule may apply to this too, huh?* “Thank you.”

“You must be very tired. I will leave you to rest.” She stood up. “Is there anything you need?”

“No. I... Thank you.” He repeats, feeling the weariness settle in his bones.

“Qiren wished to see you when you woke up, but I sent him back before curfew.” She clasped her hands in front of her. “Would it be alright to see him tomorrow morning?”

Wei Wuxian hesitates for a moment. “I suppose.” He yawns. “I must thank him at least.”

Lan Xiang nods. "I will be in the other room. There's an alert talisman that will inform me if your condition changes." She walked towards the door. "Good night, Wei-gongzi."

"Good night." He says as she finally shuts the door behind her.

*Fuck.*

Just what on earth happened?

He *died*? Just like that? In such a shameful way?

He died like any other beggar or slave did every winter?

Had he not earned an honourable death? With his sword in his hand as he protected the weak from untameable beasts?

Yes, he was alive. But still.

If Lan Qiren hadn't found him, his heart would've stopped and nothing would've saved him. He would've died disgracefully, making the Jiang Sect lose face.

But didn't he already?

The Lans seem to believe he is being mistreated by them. How could he repay their kindness in such a way?

*Fuck.*

Despite the way his body demanded rest, sleep didn't come easily that night.

---

By the time the bells toll for Wushi, Wei Wuxian has slept all of two hours. The Lans, thankfully, visited him no earlier than Sishi.

"Wei-gongzi, apologies for disturbing your rest." Lan Xichen bows lower than his station demands. Lan Zhan stays quiet but mimics him silently.

"No need." He gives them a tired smile. "Thank you, Lan-xiansheng, for saving me." He bows as much as his condition allows.

Lan Qiren tilts his head. "Wei Wuxian," he begins. "My nephews and I are here to offer our most sincere apologies for allowing this situation to occur." He bows. *Bows. Lan Qiren bows.*

"What!? Oh no, please don't bow!" He waves his hands, unable to make them rise from where he sits on the bed. "You did nothing, it was my fault! I overestimated my strength and didn't get out of the water when I should have."

"Wei Yi—" Lan Zhan keeps his eyes on the floor. "Wei-gongzi voiced his concern regarding the cold. Wangji dismissed it and left him alone within private Clan grounds. Wangji's negligence resulted in Wei-gongzi's condition and its severity. Wangji will face punishment."



“Punish—” Wei Wuxian cried. “Lan Zhan! What are you talking about?”

“Wangji confessed he ignored your complaints and allowed himself to be disturbed by your teasing.” Lan Qiren answered for him. “Xichen helped you cross the Clan’s wards, with the knowledge that Wangji was in the Cold Springs alone. He had enough insight to understand Wangji’s reaction to be a possibility. He later learned Wangji left you alone and didn’t report it.”

“No, no, no, you have it all wrong!” He started getting up, ignoring the way his ribs protested the movement. “I tease! That’s what I do! I wasn’t serious when I said that, I thought I could stand it! It’s not Lan Zhan or Zewu-jun’s fault!” He used the bed frame to help himself up to his feet.

“Regardless of the circumstances,” Lan Xichen maintained his lowered position. “We broke rules and our actions resulted in Wei-gongzi being hurt.”

“I won’t accept you being punished for my own foolishness!” He pulled Lan Xichen up from his bow.

“Wei Wuxian, despite your *foolishness*, my nephews knew better than to act the way they did. They will be punished with four hundred strikes of the discipline ruler and will copy conduct five times.”

“You can’t!” He turned to him. “Lan-xiansheng, you can’t do this!”

“Xichen and Wangji are aware of how grave the consequences of their actions were.” Lan Qiren tilted his head. “Wangji asked for one strike of the discipline whip for every incense stick you were... dead. This punishment is already a compromise with the Elders.”

He... *what?*

“Lan Zhan!? What were you thinking!” He grabbed him by his arms, finally stopping the ridiculous, ridiculous bowing. “Do you have any idea how long whip wounds take to heal?”

Lan Zhan averted his gaze. “More than two months, it seems.”

*Ah. They all knew.*

“You...” He staggered back, suddenly feeling faint.

Half a heartbeat later the Lan Healer burst through the door.

“What is he doing up?” She rushed forward to steady him. “Qiren, I told you not to upset him. This is enough.” Lan Xiang shot Lan Qiren a fierce glare as she helped him back into the bed. “Wei-gongzi, your body is still recovering, you must allow yourself to rest.”

“Xichen, Wangji, you are dismissed.”

“Yes, Shufu.” They both echoed before leaving.

Wei Wuxian clenched his jaw and looked away. Just how much more humiliation was he going to be put through now?

“Wei Wuxian.” He heard Lan Qiren sit beside the bed. “There is something else we must discuss.” He saw Lan Xiang roll her eyes as she checked his ribs. “Should I come back at a later time?”

“No.” He didn’t turn his head to look at Lan Qiren. “Just get it over with.”

“You-!” Lan Qiren sputtered at the disrespect, huffing before starting again. “I have to clear some things before I send a message to Jiang Fengmian.”

Wei Wuxian gave a hum of acknowledgement.

“Your disappearance wasn’t reported by the Jiang contingent, not even after you didn’t return to your rooms that night.” Lan Qiren cleared his throat. “Do you know why that could be?”

Wei Wuxian breathed a laugh. *Right*. “They probably assumed I was out playing around. It wouldn’t be the first time anyways.” He side-eyed Lan Qiren. “Do they know what happened?”

“I see.” Lan Qiren stroked his beard. “They know you are indisposed. No one unrelated to the incident knows the details.”

“Good.” He nodded. He wouldn’t want Jiang Cheng or the others to see him like this. “Anything else?”

“Yes, about the... scars on your back.” There was a moment of silence before Lan Qiren resumed. “They were inflicted with Yu Ziyuan’s Zidian, correct?”

Wei Wuxian gritted his teeth. “Yes.”

“Was there a reason for the whipping?”

“Punishment.” He answered bitterly.

“Hm.” Lan Qiren frowned. “Are severe physical punishments detailed in your contract as a Head Disciple?”

That made Wei Wuxian turn his head. “What contract?”

Lan Xiang stopped her poking. “You do not have a written contract?” Her eyes were wide.

“I don’t know what you’re talking about.” He shook his head. *Was he supposed to?*

“You’re telling me you have served as Head Disciple for almost three years and your position, duties and rights were never explicitly stated on a written document?” Lan Qiren was too dignified to gape, but it was a close thing.

“Yes?”

“Wei Wuxian, are you aware that disciples are whipped only as punishment for the greatest offences?”

“Normal disciples yes, but a Head Disciple holds more responsibility.” He answers as his brows furrow. *Isn't that the reason why only he was punished for stealing lotus pods? For not dressing appropriately on hot days?*

“Wei-gongzi.” Lan Xiang seats on the edge of the bed. “More responsibility does not mean you are to be whipped.”

“But-”

“Wei Wuxian.” Lan Qiren harrumphed. “Yunmeng Laws have not allowed for unnecessary whipping of disciples in centuries, and as far as I know the Jiang Sect has not had slaves in generations.”

“What?” His voice grew fainter.

“Jiang Chin’s great-grandnephew freed the last slaves of Yunmeng.” *‘All those who find a home in Yunmeng shall be free.’ Of course he knew that. He was the Jiang Head Disciple!* “Now not even servants are held to such atrocious beatings without the most grievous crimes.” *Huh?*

“I don’t understand.” His gaze fell to his hands. *Then why...?*

“Wei Wuxian, there is one last thing I need to know.” Lan Qiren’s voice strained. “Did Jiang Fengmian know about your punishments?”

“Yes. Everyone knows.” He swallowed. *Did they know everything? Was he the only one who didn't-?*

“I understand.” Lan Qiren stood up. “I will send for Jiang Fengmian. There is much to be discussed. The Lan Sect will stand with you on this.”

“Why would you care?” He snapped. “Weren’t you the one who singled me out from the first day? Who hated me just for who my mother was? A mother I cannot even remember?” His voice cracked at the last part.

“Wei Wuxian, you-”

“How are you any better than Yu-furen?” He whispered.

Lan Qiren closed his eyes, as if taking a physical blow. He sighed and lowered to his knees in front of the bed.

“What are you-” He started but Lan Xiang shook her head.

“Lan Qiren has wronged Wei Wuxian.” He said solemnly, slowly lowering himself until his forehead touched the floor. “Arrogance is forbidden. Do not succumb to rage. Do not disrespect the younger.”

*What is he doing?*

“Do not praise yourself and slander others. Do not take advantage of your position to oppress others. Do not make assumptions about others.” He took a breath. “Do not insult people. Be careful with your words. Be respectful and humble. Be strict with yourself. Do not hold grudges.” Lan Qiren’s voice grew hoarse. “Maintain your own discipline. Honour good people. Nurture aspirations. Be fair, and others will follow. Earn trust.”

“Qiren...” Lan Xiang breathed.

“Win friendships with kindness. Do not criticise other people. No slandering. Don’t be unreasonable. Do not treat others with contempt.” Lan Qiren kept his head on the ground. “This one has broken all these rules in the past two months. This one will accept any punishment Wei Wuxian sees fit.”

“Lan-xiansheng!” *What on earth!?*

“This one forgot his principles and treated Wei Wuxian poorly, allowed himself to be blinded by grudges and disrespected the dead. Qiren asks for punishment.”

“Lan-xiansheng, please stop! Lan-daifu, please do something!”

“Wei-gongzi, I believe this is something he must do.”

“No! How could I?” He tried getting up to make Lan Qiren rise, but Lan Xiang stopped him.

“Qiren, stand up.” Lan Xiang calls. “As much as I admire your resolve to make amends with Wei-gongzi, right now you are simply upsetting him more. There is only so much the human mind can take.”

“Apologies.” Lan Qiren slowly stood up. “I will leave you to rest.” He inclined his head.

“Good.” Lan Xiang nodded. “I will have someone send you a notice once Wei-gongzi comes to a decision.”

Wei Wuxian relaxes at that. He seriously couldn’t take anymore of this.

Lan Qiren leaves quietly and soon after so does Lan Xiang.

It is only once he is alone that he begins to process everything that has happened.

Lan Zhan and Zewu-jun blamed themselves for what happened. While they did *technically* break rules, did it really have to be punished so harshly?

Why would Lan Zhan demand to be whipped? *Is he out of his mind?* It is a good thing that the Elders didn’t agree.

Lan Zhan? The Second Heir of Lan, whipped for a servant’s son? Ridiculous.

But then again, if it had been him, Yu-furen would never let him forget.

Was what they said true? Was he truly never supposed to live with Yu-furen's hatred carved onto his back?

What was he supposed to do now?

If he asked Jiang-shushu, would he deny it? Or would he avoid answering like every time he asked about his parents?

Perhaps... maybe, just maybe, he could listen to Lan Qiren.

He didn't trust him, no.

But he was someone he admired.

Seeing past the arrogance and obvious disdain for him, Lan Qiren was a wise man with far more knowledge and experience than Wei Wuxian. A Scholar. A cultivator who was respected not only because of his birth, but because of his accomplishments. A famed teacher all throughout the Cultivation World.

And most important of all, a man who humbled himself and admitted to his faults.

No one had ever apologised to Wei Wuxian like this.

It isn't like people respect street children enough to apologise for making them drop the only bun they had to eat.

It isn't like the other disciples respected the weak waif who was too scared of upsetting them to take offence on their cruel pranks, nor did they care enough when it resulted in him being punished for them.

He tries to remember, but the last time he seems to recall is the night he came to Lotus Pier, when Jiang Cheng threatened to sick the beasts on him. When Shijie found him on the tree and they had made up over soup.

After that, all his mind supplies are Jiang Cheng's mumbled words between spoonfuls of soup – at Shijie's insistence, or the other disciples' rushed '*sorrys*' when sparring.

Those were not real apologies.

But this?

This is completely different.

Lan Qiren repented.

Lan Qiren didn't ask for forgiveness, but admitted his wrongs.

Lan Qiren lowered himself and bowed to his junior. To someone so much lower in station. He was willing to take whatever punishment he desired.

Wei Wuxian respected that.

In another life, he may have never formally apologised to Wei Wuxian, let alone bow to him.

But this was a different life already, wasn't it?

---

"Jiang Fengmian." Lan Qiren greeted him coldly.

"Lan Qiren." Jiang Fengmian gave him one of his upsettingly calm smiles as he sat down in front of him. "I believe my ward has caused trouble. I must apologise for whatever he has done."

"Nonsense." Lan Qiren stopped him before he could continue.

"Have I misunderstood?" Jiang Fengmian tilted his head like a puppy. Lan Qiren held no fondness towards dogs. "Your letter said Wei Wuxian was involved in an accident and your nephews were punished."

"Indeed." Lan Qiren closed his eyes for a moment and took a deep breath. "Wei Wuxian was not at fault. I summoned you for a different reason."

Jiang Fengmian served himself a cup of tea. "And what may that be?"

"Wei Wuxian suffered a severe case of hypothermia. He was found many hours later and given the appropriate care. His heart stopped for a whole Shi before Lan Xiang and our healers reanimated him." Jiang Fengmian's cup froze mid air. "He is now recovering under Lan Xiang's direct custody."

"I see." Jiang Fengmian looked down. "He is well, then?"

"As well as he can be, for now."

"Hm." Jiang Fengmian took a sip.

When it was clear that he was not going to say anything else, Lan Qiren continued. "There is another matter." Jiang Fengmian hummed as he set down his tea. "The healers found very troubling scars on Wei Wuxian's body."

He waited for Jiang Fengmian to react, but all he did was stare back at him.

"You're not going to deny it?" Lan Qiren's voice dropped.

"This is an internal matter of the Jiang Sect." Jiang Fengmian had the gall to avert his gaze.

"How could that be when Wei Wuxian's tie to the Jiang Sect and status as Head Disciple was never officially written?" He barked.

Jiang Fengmian's eyes widened. "How do you..."

“What is Wei Wuxian to you?” He dared the other.

“What?” Jiang Fengmian was taken aback. “He is the Head Disciple of my Sect.”

“Let me phrase it differently.” Lan Qiren tried to stop himself from yelling. “Who is he to you?”

Jiang Fengmian was silent for a moment. “My martial nephew. The son of my closest friends.”

Lan Qiren stood up. “How dare you disrespect Wei Changze and Cangse Sanren’s names by calling them your friends.” He walked around the table until he stood in front of Jiang Fengmian. “If you truly cared for them once, you wouldn’t have allowed your wife to break Jiang Law and whip him like this!”

Jiang Fengmian slowly stood up. “Lan Qiren, you should mind your words and not speak of what you do not understand.”

“And you have enough face to tell me my own Clan’s rules?” Lan Qiren sneered. “Tell me, have you seen the state of Wei Wuxian’s back?”

Jiang Fengmian’s jaw grew tight. “No.”

“It is horrendous.” Lan Qiren holds back a cringe as he remembers the map of lighting on the boy’s skin. “His whole back is covered in scars. It’s impossible to tell where one whip mark ends and where another begins. Lan Xiang says she doesn’t believe Wei Wuxian isn’t in constant pain.”

“It surely can’t be that serious. Wei Wuxian is strong for his age.”

“It could have stunted his cultivation. If it kept going, it could have crippled him for life.” He poked a finger on Jiang Fengmian’s chest. “Is that not too serious?”

“Lan Qiren, you must understand—” Jiang Fengmian raised his hands placatingly.

“What is there to understand?” He finally yelled. “You took Wei Wuxian into your home and didn’t even deign to give him a stable position within the Sect. You paraded him as the genius Head Disciple of Yunmeng Jiang yet allowed him to be abused by Yu Ziyuan against your own ancestor’s word!”

“Lan Qiren, I don’t understand why you’re saying all this.” Jiang Fengmian feigned ignorance. “Even if there was never a written life’s contract, Wei Wuxian knows he owes a debt to the—”

When later asked, Lan Qiren would say he saw red for a moment. That he lost control and couldn’t stop himself from punching Jiang Fengmian straight in the face.

In truth, he had thought Jiang Fengmian needed to have some sense slapped onto him since long ago.

“Lan Qiren!” Jiang Fengmian cried pitifully as he held his bleeding nose.

“A life’s contract ends with one’s life.” Lan Qiren took out a handkerchief from his robes and wrapped his right hand. “Whatever debt you think Wei Wuxian owed you... would have been paid the moment his heart stopped.”

“Lan Qiren, do you understand what you’re doing?” Jiang Fengmian’s voice was nasal as he took out a handkerchief of his own. “Do you think you’re helping him? What will he do if he leaves Yunmeng Jiang? Will you take him in? Do you truly believe he would be happier here than in Lotus Pier? His home?”

Lan Qiren turned his back on him. “I wronged Wei Wuxian during his time here. When I asked for punishment,” he glanced at Jiang Fengmian. “Do you know what he asked for?”

The other stayed silent.

“Stories.” Lan Qiren’s voice lowered. “All Wei Wuxian wanted was stories about his parents. To know more about them. What they were like, what they liked to do, if they liked music or preferred to paint, how they met, how they fell in love.” He couldn’t stop the venom in his voice. “How cruel do you have to be to deny this to him?”

Jiang Fengmian dared to justify himself, shoulders slumped. “If you were in my position, you would understand.”

“I don’t think I would.” He shook his head and walked towards the door. “Gusu Lan will cease relations with Yunmeng Jiang until satisfactory judgement is passed on Yu Ziyuan for her actions.” He stopped under the frame for a moment. “Both of you are banned from Cloud Recesses until further notice. Your disciples are welcome to stay, but do not expect an invitation to the lectures next year.”

He left without waiting for an answer. He’ll write lines later for the rules broken during the meeting, but now he had a hand to heal and a more important punishment to serve.

---

Wei Wuxian wasn’t alone when Lan Qiren came in.

No, he was with *Wangji* .

Wangji, who Wei Wuxian insisted completed his lines in the healer’s ward so he could oversee it himself. “*It is only fair, Lan Zhan!*”

A part of him thought it was just so the boy could tease and bother his nephew, but another part felt it could be that Wei Wuxian was lonely.

How would Lan Qiren feel if he had gone through a quarter of what Wei Wuxian has lived? How would Lan Qiren feel if he learnt his life had been nothing but a toy for the man he admired the most? How would he feel if he was suddenly without a place to call home?

Wei Wuxian was allowed to seek company, even if it was with his youngest nephew.



Besides, Wangji didn't seem as bothered by the teasing as he used to be.

Now, Wei Wuxian was sitting on his bed with a tray on his lap, working on what seems to be *talismans*?

He has not realised Lan Qiren entered the room. Neither has Wangji, who silently watches Wei Wuxian as he pouts down in concentration.

When Wei Wuxian reaches up to tap his nose, Lan Qiren realises the boy not only resembles his mother, but also his father.

"Wei Wuxian. Wangji."

"Shufu." Wangji stands to greet him. Lan Qiren pretends he doesn't see the way his ears have turned pink, as if he had been caught doing more than just staring at the other.

"Xiansheng!" Wei Wuxian beams as he looks up. "How did the meeting go?" He put the tray on the floor. There were ink stains on his hands.

"Not as well as it could have gone." Lan Qiren answers honestly.

"Oh." Wei Wuxian's grin falls a little. "What happened to your hand?" His brows furrowed.

"I..." Lan Qiren looks down at the bandages before pulling down his sleeve. "I lost myself for a moment and struck Jiang Fengmian." He pauses. "In the face."

Wei Wuxian's expression is of utter disbelief. "What?" His eyes and mouth are wide.

"Shufu?" Wangji takes a step closer and reaches for his arm.

"Do not trouble yourself." He pulls back.

"But, why?" Wei Wuxian continues to gape.

"Our disagreement was too great." He answers vaguely. "I will discipline myself accordingly."

"Ah." Wei Wuxian slumps. "Can I see him?" He asks after a moment.

Lan Qiren's heart clenches. "I'm afraid he has already left. He instructed the Jiang contingent to pack." Shameful, if you asked him. It simply shows how much of a coward Jiang Fengmian is.

"I see." Wei Wuxian lowered his head, bangs obscuring his face. "It's true, then." His voice was no louder than a whisper.

Lan Qiren knew Wei Wuxian had a quick mind, but it pained him how fast he understood what had happened.

"Wei Ying?"

Wei Wuxian turned away on the bed, pulling the cover over himself. “I’m tired, Lan Zhan. Can you leave me alone, please?” His tone was terribly controlled. No hint of emotion.

His nephew looked at him questioningly, but Lan Qiren shook his head. Wangji hesitated, for a moment seeming like he would protest, but finally relented. “Rest well.” He bowed and left quietly.

Once the door is shut, there is a moment of weighted silence.

“What?” Wei Wuxian’s voice is muffled.

Lan Qiren sighs. “Wei Wuxian, I understand you’re upset, but I do not advise you to isolate yourself.” He knew loneliness can even break the liveliest of hearts. Had he not seen it already?

The figure on the bed stirred, but Wei Wuxian remained giving him his back. “Please leave.”

“Wei Wuxian...”

“No, please, I need a moment-” His voice finally breaks. “I can’t do this right now.” Lan Qiren sees the covers begin to tremble and he knows he should leave.

“I will come back with dinner.” He relents.

As he closes the door behind him, he hears Wei Wuxian choke in a sob.

It is a sound he wishes to never hear again.

---

When he brings dinner, Wei Wuxian stays quiet.

He doesn’t chatter the way he has seen him do with his friends, and sometimes one sidedly with Wangji in the mess hall.

He doesn’t complain about the bland taste of the food, which he barely nibbles at, nor about the fact that Lan Qiren doesn’t leave once the meal is done.

Lan Qiren brought a small bottle of chilli oil for him, but it remained untouched by his bowl.

“Wei Wuxian.” He calls once the other has given up pretending to poke at his rice.

He barely receives a hum.

“I understand you are grieving,” he starts. “But I cannot let you shut yourself out like this.” It is harrowing to see Cangse Sanren’s – Wei Wuxian’s eyes so devoid of life.

“What would you do?” Wei Wuxian looked down. “If you found out everyone you love lied to you?”

There is nothing Lan Qiren can say to that.

“What can I do?” Wei Wuxian keeps his head lowered. “I have no Sect. No family. Nowhere to go.”

“Wei Wuxian.” Lan Qiren purses his lips. “Before I spoke with Jiang Fengmian, I told you the Lan Clan stands with you. If you so wish, you can have a position here.” Wei Wuxian looks up, brows knitted together. “Even if you do not wish to tie yourself to a Sect, as the one responsible for your practical defection, the Lan will sponsor your needs, no debt owed.”

Wei Wuxian gasps. “What?”

“If you wish to follow your parents’ path and become a travelling rogue cultivator, I will personally see to it that you do not struggle financially.” Lan Qiren joined his hands on his lap. “If you wish to settle elsewhere, we will provide enough for you to live comfortably.”

“Xiansheng...” Wei Wuxian breathes. “That is too much, I couldn’t...” *It isn’t enough.*

“You *can*, Wei Wuxian.”

“But you couldn’t possibly want—” He shakes his head.

“What is it that you want, Wei Wuxian?”

“I...” He can see Wei Wuxian’s eyes begin to water. “I want a home.” Is all he whispers before the dam bursts.

Lan Qiren sits there, watching as Wei Wuxian cries, tears streaming down his face, shoulders shaking with every sob. He stands and walks around the table, settling beside the trembling boy.

He offers him a handkerchief and waits for him to take it, but doesn’t expect him to throw himself into his arms, burying his face in his chest.

Lan Qiren doesn’t know what to do, other than settle his hands on Wei Wuxian’s back. “It will be alright.” He tries to soothe. “You can have a home. Wherever you want. With whoever you want.”

“I miss Shijie, and I didn’t get to say goodbye to Jiang Cheng.” The front of his robes dampened. “And I miss Mama and Baba.”

“I know.” He rubs circles on the other’s back. “I miss them too, sometimes.”

Wei Wuxian leans back at that. “I thought you hated my mother.” He sniffs.

“I saw Changze as a friend.” He admits. “It was... complicated, with Cangse Sanren. We had our differences and I wasn’t especially fond of her.” He closes his eyes. “But I owed her my life.”

“Really?” For the first time that evening, there is a sparkle in Wei Wuxian’s eyes.

“Do you wish to hear the story?”

The boy finally accepts the handkerchief and wipes his face as he sits back in his place. “Yes, please.” He nods eagerly.

---

That night, Lan Qiren tells him many stories.

Of how Mama had come down the Immortal Baoshan Sanren’s mountain, bringing chaos and laughter with her. “You laugh like her, you have her smile.”

Of how Baba came to Gusu to serve Jiang Fengmian. How he had not been allowed to enter the lectures, so he spent his mornings playing the dizi on the edge of the mountain. “You remind me of him too; the way you stand, how you rub your nose when you’re concentrating. He had a special sense of humour too, I believe that was what drew your mother towards him.”

How he ignored Mama for weeks, because he feared it would hurt his master. “Cangse Sanren never liked Jiang Fengmian. She said he would quietly sulk whenever he didn’t get his way, that she preferred to stay away from his and Yu Ziyuan’s terrible energy.”

How Mama had taken time to teach Baba the things she learned in class, until Lan Qiren scolded her for being late to copy lines. “She always disturbed class with her pranks.” How Lan Qiren had taken over Baba’s tutoring while he oversaw Mama’s punishment, who in turn began sneaking Baba little drawings.

He learns that, like him, Baba favoured the bow for hunting, and that Mama loved tweaking talismans to change their purpose.

“I see you have inherited her wit.” Lan Qiren had pointed at the small pile of silly designs he had been working on to take his mind off of things the past few days.

He learns that is how Mama saved Baba, Lan Qiren and Jiang Fengmian on a nighthunt. That Lan Qiren refused to use her inventions, because his teacher had not approved them, and it nearly cost him his life.

“She shaved my beard that night.” Lan Qiren strokes it, as if reminding himself that it is still there.

Now, he knows how Mama proclaimed her love for Baba in front of everyone, yelling at the wind how she would *‘love to travel the world and cultivate to eternity with you, Wei-gege!’* – Lan Qiren had gotten beet red at that part of the story.

“A year later, your parents eloped. I did not maintain close contact, as my brother entered seclusion and I had to assume leadership.” Lan Qiren shakes his head as he looks away. “I learned of their deaths far too late, and didn’t know they had a child until Jiang Fengmian announced he had found you, barely six years ago. If I had known...”

If only.

---

It is two days later that he is finally allowed to leave the healer's ward for a walk.

Lan Zhan had visited before class, but Wei Wuxian had been busy with Lan Xiang's breathing exercises. He didn't think they were all that important, but the healers insisted.

They said, once his ribs healed, they could begin treating more thoroughly the scarring on his back. Even if he didn't really fancy being constantly pierced with needles, the idea of having at least *some* of the tension relieved was too good to ignore.

An apprentice healer accompanies him as he strolls through the back mountains, though he insists they take breaks – which Wei Wuxian is certain are completely unnecessary.

By the time they reach the meadow, the sun is already high in the sky. Morning lectures would end soon.

They sit under the shade and Wei Wuxian allows himself some calm to feel the breeze against his skin and the grass under his hands.

It is so quiet, he slips into a dreamless slumber.

When he wakes, he feels a light weight on his lap.

As he looks down, it takes a moment for him to understand what the little grey ball is.

"A bunny?" He reaches to scratch it between its ears. It barely stirs, but he notices another ball of fur hopping towards him. "Hello there." Where did these little guys come from? "Were you looking for your friend?" He whispers as the white rabbit sniffs him before hopping onto his lap and snuggling with the other one.

He turns his head to find the apprentice who had accompanied him, only to find him gone, and in his place, Lan Qiren sat quietly meditating.

"Xiansheng?" He controls the level of his voice so as to not startle the bunnies.

Lan Qiren opens his eyes. "Wei Wuxian." He nods.

"How long have you been there?"

"Not too long." He looks at the dozing creatures on his lap. "I did not want to disturb you or the little one."

"Do you like rabbits?" He says in a teasing tone, before he remembers something. "Do you know if Lan Zhan likes them?"

"I am not particularly fond of any animal." Lan Qiren frowns, before his face softens. "But I believe Wangji prefers the quiet ones."

Wei Wuxian brightens. "Do you think he would accept these two as an apology?"

"Pets are forbidden."

“No, no, not pets.” Lan Qiren raises an eyebrow. “They’re friends!”

“I see.” Lan Qiren looks sceptical. “What would you want to apologise for?”

“I made Lan Zhan mad the other day.” Wei Wuxian pouts. “I do not want him to hate me.”

Something flashes through Lan Qiren’s face, but it is gone too fast for Wei Wuxian to decipher its meaning. “I do not believe he hates you.”

Wei Wuxian huffs a laugh. “You’re the first person to say that.”

“Wangji...” Lan Qiren sighs. “He has always had trouble expressing himself.” He brings a hand up to his beard. “Xichen believes you have been a good influence on him. I have seen it too, this past week.”

Wei Wuxian’s cheeks heat. “Aiya, Xiansheng, how could that be? I’ve only made him break rules!”

Lan Qiren doesn’t exactly roll his eyes. “Wangji is too stubborn to admit it, but Xichen and I can see he has grown fond of you.”

He frowns. *Fond?*

If Lan Zhan was fond of him, then why would he refuse to be his friend?

It had hurt a little – the constant rejection – but maybe, if he truly spoke with Lan Zhan...

Wei Wuxian nodded determinedly. “I have to talk to him.” He looked at Lan Qiren. “Do you know where he is?”

“He must be in the library.”

“Perfect!” He scooped up the bunnies and stored them in the front of his robes. “I must go, Xiansheng.”

“A moment, Wei Wuxian.” Lan Qiren stopped him before he could leave. “There is something I wish to give you.”

“Give?”

“Here.” He hands him a long box.

Wei Wuxian opens it, revealing the spiritual dizi inside. “Thank you, Xiansheng.” He mutters as he takes the delicate dark finish in.

“It is designed after your father’s,” Lan Qiren explains. “I heard you favoured the instrument too.”

“I do.” He breathes, already thinking about the songs he could play. “Do you think Lan Zhan would duet with me?” He looks up, hopeful.

Something softens in his eyes. “You should ask him.”

“I will!” He cheers. “Thank you so much!” He bows. “I will cherish it!” He jumps on his heels before rushing towards the library.

He tries not to run, so as not to bother the bunnies he carries, but Lan Qiren still berates him. “Do not overtire yourself, Wei Wuxian!”

Wei Wuxian giggles to himself as he pretends to lower his pace until he is out of Lan Qiren’s view.

Maybe not everything in his life was lost.

---

It is that evening that Lan Qiren hears it for the first time. A melody sung by the sweetest notes of the dizi, accompanied by the qin.

A song of hope, that feels warm and conveys the fondness the ones playing share.

A song of love.

Lan Qiren smiles to himself.

When Lan Qiren first knew Wei Wuxian would come to the lectures, he had feared the chaos would bring irreparable change.

Now, he no longer fears it.

He can get used to the sound of Wei Wuxian’s laughter.

## End Notes

Some sort of epilogue I may or may not write someday.

- WWX settles in a farm north of Gusu, near the border with Qishan. He will get all the potatoes he wants.
- WWX will technically be a rogue, but will visit regularly.
- He will meet WN and WQ.
- He will meet Popo, who finally snap and "fight those who abuse power" and take what is rightfully hers. (Popo in my head was WRH's aunt, older than his father, so she would have been heir had she not been born a woman.)
- No one can or tries to prove she did it, but WRH is dead, his sons out of the picture, and Wen Popo is Sect Leader.
- Wangxian marry and adopt a gaggle of children. Lan Qiren is elated.
- All is well.

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